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ABSTRACT

In order to impact on unemployment of adults and to increase job mobility, the following needs must be met: an increased number of adequate delivery systems; improved teacher education and guidance and counseling programs; early exposure to career development with equal, if not greater, emphasis placed on vocational education; identification of client needs, specifically the needs of the currently unemployed and members of special needs groups; and high visibility from a publicity and media standpoint. Close relationships must be established among the education community, legislative community, and employment community so that (1) forecasting systems for future job needs can be developed; (2) the needs of the unemployed, employees, and employers can be identified; and (3) both long-range and short-term programs can be developed to meet these needs. (BM)

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VOCATIONAL EDUCATION'S ROLE IN IMPACTING ON ADULT UNEMPLOYMENT AND JOB MOBILITY

Presented By:

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Presented at:

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
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For the purposes of discussion today several assumptions will be made. We will assume that vocational education is important in today's society. The importance is highlighted by this conference. The fact that so many educators, legislators, industrial leaders, and other interested persons are in attendance today signifies the importance of jobs and the role vocational education plays in creation of those jobs. While I do not purport to be an expert in vocational education, from an employer's perspective I will attempt to comment on the role vocational education plays in impacting employment, specifically the role in impacting on adult unemployment and job mobility. Because of my limited exposure to national trends, I will tend to localize my comments and speak specifically to that information which is apparent to me from my dealings with the Upper Valley Joint Vocation School which serves, As Dr. Adams has already outlined, several counties in western Ohio.

It is generally accepted from a recent survey of employers in Ohio that the experience of these employers with vocational education graduates has been quite favorable (60% of a total sample of 251 employers from OACVE survey indicates this). At the same time these employers indicate a need for more practical experience in vocational education. Miami County, Ohio, employers feel that the Upper Valley JVS has been very successful in assisting in job mobility.

If the vocational education concept was not believed to be successful, this conference would not exist. There are, however, questions which need to be answered concerning the productive role in the educational sphere of traditional versus vocational education. Who will benefit from traditional/vocational education? Who will be selected for vocational education programs? What percentage of

education dollars will be spent for traditional or vocational education? Before adequately impacting adult unemployment, many of these questions must be answered. As professionals in the field of vocational education and persons interested in meeting the needs of our society with respect to employment, we must answer these questions. We must find solutions to the problems that exist with respect to these areas.

There is an increase in the availability of training in vocational education programs. This increase in a result of recognized needs of both the educational and business community with respect to utilization of resources--human and financial. Many of these programs are successful today because they offer alternatives to students who are seeking such alternatives for career objectives. Generally these are the motivated persons. Similarly programs need to reach the unmotivated person. This can be done largely through increased career counselor education and guidance programs, through career education at the elementary and jr. high levels, and through greater visability of training which leads directly to employment. As I see it, there are several areas of need which I would like to briefly discuss. These areas of need present several challenges to you as program planners and policy implementors.

My employer, Hobart Corporation, is enjoying the availability of vocational education in our Miami County community and is making tremendous use of both the JVS graduates and the adults who are enrolled in the Second School Day concept for adult education. We have found that using these students has met a specific need of employment, that is, that direct availability of qualified people who will perform hard-to-fill and open jobs which are critical to our productive capacity.

Hobart Corporation welcomed the Joint Vocational School and participated in the start-up discussion, and provided community endorsement and leadership. Many employees were permitted to work with the development and planning staff and advisory committees in overall planning, facility lay-out, identification of equipment, and curriculum development. We are presently involved in pre-service programs, planning for in-service programs, and have employees continuing to assist as part-time instructors in the Second School Day, in the Adult Basic Education, and skilled trades and other skilled programs.

Many of the students have been employed from office/clerical programs, computer science programs, food service, machine trades, drafting, graphic arts, and printing. Use of the students who have been exposed to or have completed JVS courses reduces our company's need to spend time and money for in-house training programs for new employees. The Upper Valley students enter the work force ready for work. General involvement of business at the start and aggressive, continued involvement in the future will keep Upper Valley JVS viable in our community.

As a multinational Company headquartered in Troy, Ohio, Hobart has many locations throughout the United States. We have not enjoyed a similar relationship in many other areas of this country. I am sure that many other employers also are in the same situation. Where there is availability of a Joint Vocational School or quality vocational education, the employers are making productive use of these students. However, in those areas where such training or education is not available, the employer finds it difficult to fill certain jobs without resorting to extraordinary measures and expense. I would also imagine that unemployment is higher in some of these areas.

Dr. Adams has already mentioned the reduction of unemployment in our area. The large employers of Miami and Shelby Counties have taken the lead, by example, and rightly so, to encourage the smaller employers and entrepreneurs to enter the community. At least 500 jobs have been created since 1975. This creates a spiral effect--more new employers enter the area, more jobs are created, more skilled people trained at the Upper Valley JVS are hired. This is good for everyone.

What then is the need for vocational education with respect to impacting unemployment? There is an increased need for delivery systems--those training institutions where students may opt or elect to participant in a "nontraditional" education program not only at the high school level but also at the post-high school level. Important in the increase of delivery systems are the availability of facilities with proper training equipment and the availability of competent educational staff members to affect proper training. It is very important in training students for work that their skills be learned on equipment similar to that of the work place. Therefore, one responsibility of the delivery system is to provide to the students the appropriate equipment for the skills which they are learning. As a consequence, funding techniques need to be developed at both the state and federal level to adequately provide funds for capital expenditures for buildings and for equipment.

Another critical area is that of teacher education and correspondingly improved guidance and counseling programs. Thinking back on my school days, I was very impressed by that teacher who challenged me to do better, by that instructor who by example presented good work habits and a good work ethic for me to follow. I think the same is true of students today. Therefore, the role model that the

students must have is one of a competent person dedicated to the high ideals of the American economic system and its resulting work ethic. In Dr. Adams' comments about the success of Upper Valley JVS, he mentioned that students rank their teachers as competent individuals. I feel this plays a large role in the ultimate success of the students in that program. Further, this has obvious benefits for employers. Therefore, we must provide to the delivery system competent instructors, dedicated instructors, properly compensated instructors so those students who are looking for the opportunity will, in fact, have their objectives met.

We must also provide through the delivery system an interest or exposure at an early age to career development--with equal, if not greater, emphasize placed on vocational education when compared with the traditional education program. The state Boards of Education and state legislatures need to provide to the education system within their states sufficient monies and leadership to impact this most vital area.

Admittedly, these are long-term programs, programs which will take many years to develop. It will take quite a long time to see effective change occur in this respect. However, we must begin now to do that. But what can be done on a short range basis? What can be done for those persons, who are currently unemployed, those who are currently under-employed, to create opportunity in business and industry for job mobility and increased employment?

Little is known about the unemployed as it relates to what motivates them, what has caused them to be in the circumstances in which they are found. What does not motivate them, how can they be reached? This is where the competent vocational

counselor, the competent vocational educator can help. There is a need for programs to be developed to reach these persons and to reduce unemployment. Most vocational educators will claim that they are doing their part for unemployment of youth. I think from the comments Dr. Adams has already made you will agree that the Upper Valley Joint Vocational School is making such an impact within its school district. Employment in the 1977 graduating class was about 95% for the available graduates. But what of the adult, that individual who is receiving unemployment compensation and is in the welfare system? They are most difficult to reach, they are most difficult to access. I feel that significant pilot programs must be implemented to discover what motivates them, what are their anticipated needs and see to it that solutions be found to their problems. I would be interested to see development of a profile of the unemployed worker. From this profile educators could develop programs which specifically meet their needs.

With today's computer technology and statistics available through Bureaus of Employment Services, this should not be a difficult task, that is, to develop and make existing profile data on these persons available to the education community so that curricula can be established for meeting the needs. This cooperative effort is necessary. Again I commend AVA and the National Academy for this conference in an attempt to bring these groups closer together. Through this joint effort and with the computer technology available to us, greater information can be obtained on the unemployed adult interested in vocational training. Who is he? Where did he come from? What courses of training is he interested in? What are his vocational interests?

The education community also needs to work jointly with the employment community to determine what makes a successful employee in a specific job. What are the

skill traits, what are the personality traits that make an individual successful in a particular job? With this information, coupled with a profile of the unemployed, better matches can be made for available jobs. At this point, however, let me sound the signal of concern. There is presently existing legislation which restricts the ability of the public sector in sharing information of this nature. There is pending legislation which, in fact, proposes to pass these restrictions on to the private sector. If we are to meet the needs of our society, if we are to meet the goals of the present administration, and I am sure of future administrations to eliminate or to significantly reduce unemployment, then such restrictions on free access and sharing of this kind of data must be completely eliminated or significantly reduced.

In conjunction with Bureaus of Employment Services and with employers, the education community needs to develop forecasting systems for future job needs. I am told that employment forecasters predict that at least one job out of every three jobs in which Americans will be employed by the mid 1980's does not exist today. For various reasons, many jobs in which Americans are employed today will not provide viable employment within the next ten years. This problem seems to accentuate the need for the use of our technologies and expertice to adequately address these problems, not in the future but immediately. These studies tend to be long-term studies, however, it is my opinion that they must be both short-term as well as long-term. We have immediate needs which must be addressed, and unless such needs are immediately addressed the future of our country and our economic system may be in doubt.

What is to be done with the many graduating seniors of traditional programs in 1978? A large percentage of them will not be going on to college. They primarily

will be going into the available work force. Most of these students will be coming from traditional education programs, the comprehensive high schools, in which they have not learned specific job skills which will qualify them to compete with the student who has graduated from a vocation education program. They become, by and large, unemployed and, therefore, a challenge to the vocational educator.

There are other special interest groups within this large adult unemployment picture. As a result of legislation, rules and regulations, everyone in the private and public sector is concerned about, and generally must develop programs to meet the employment needs of these groups. I refer to minorities, women, and handicapped or disabled persons. Employment statistics indicate that many persons in these groups find themselves also a member of the unemployed sector. With the existence of affirmative action programs for employers, most of the available, qualified candidates are now employed. There are many of these unemployed persons which need to be re-trained or cross-trained in other areas. This is where the Joint Vocational School and vocational education can provide for employers programs to move these people from the unemployment rolls. Here again the Bureaus of Employment Services working in conjunction with vocational education institutions can identify specific needs of the unemployed and begin to provide specific training for the jobs which are available within the community. Similarly, Bureaus of Vocational Rehabilitation through their identification, training and counseling programs can work with the vocational education community to establish viable programs meeting the needs of area employers.

Employers can provide job mobility by encouraging existing employees to make use of vocational education programs for upgrading job skills, thereby filling the need for more highly skilled employees and opening the entry-level jobs for

those persons who are in the unemployment sector. Further, there is a need for programs which specifically address another large segment of the available work force, the displaced housewife or homemaker. This group presents challenges to counselors, to the general education community, and to employers. There must be information gathered to combat sex stereotyping, particularly with regard to non-traditional job preparation which is available to both sexes.

The Joint Vocational School in Miami County has been successful in meeting many of the immediate needs of both students and employers. I think this will continue because of the high visability of the successful individuals who complete either the high school or the adult program. Local newspapers carry success stories. Radio and television carry success stories, particularly through the production of programs by the Radio and Television Production facilities of the school. Employees, who by virtue of advanced training increased job satisfaction and possibly being promoted, share this information with fellow workers. Word-of-mouth advertising continues to increase within the community. Aggressive publicity programs which tout this high visability will permit the Upper Valley JVS to continue to expand and to meet the ever-increasing needs in our community.

To summarize, in order to adequately to impact on unemployment of adults and to increase job mobility, there is a need for an adequate delivery system, identification of client needs, and high visability from a publicity and media standpoint. Close relationships must be established as among the educational community, the legislative community and the employment community. All of us must be willing to work together to accomplish the goal of job creation through vocational education.